

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the following claims which are pending in the present application:

1. (Currently amended) A decision support method for two or more pre-defined criteria and one or more pre-defined and ordinally ranked categories for each criterion, and for two or more profiles, each profile comprising a set of two or more of the criteria and each criterion in the set associated with one of the categories for that criterion, the method comprising:

~~for two or more pre-defined criteria, each criterion associated with one or more pre-defined and ordinally ranked categories performing a comparative assessment of profiles each profile comprising a set of two or more of the criteria, each criterion in the set instantiated with one of the categories for that criterion, wherein the comparative assessment comprises the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs, the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs comprising:~~

~~generating undominated profile pairs;~~

~~presenting the undominated profile pairs to a decision maker for ordinal pairwise ranking;~~

~~receiving from the decision maker an ordinal pairwise ranking of the profiles in each profile pair presented; and~~

identifying profile pairs that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as corollaries of ordinal pairwise rankings performed and excluding ~~them~~ the profile pairs from subsequent presentation to the decision maker;

the decision support method further comprising:

solving a system of equalities/inequalities that represents the ordinal pairwise rankings of profile pairs to obtain at least one output.

2. (Previously presented) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the at least one output comprises a point value for each category on each criterion.

3. (Previously presented) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the at least one output comprises a ranking of all possible profiles.

4. (Previously presented) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the at least one output comprises a ranking of a subset of all possible profiles.

5. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying profile pairs that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as

corollaries of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed and excluding ~~them~~
the profile pairs from subsequent presentation to the decision maker comprises
identifying ~~all possible~~ profile pairs that are implicitly ordinal pairwise ranked
as corollaries of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed.

6. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the
step of generating undominated profile pairs comprises:

generating ~~a set of~~ undominated profile pairs with z criteria for each profile,
wherein z is a number greater than or equal to two and less than or equal to the
number of possible criteria.

7. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 6 wherein the
ordinal ranking of profile pairs is repeated for at least one ~~further~~ other value of
 z , and wherein for any ~~further~~ other value of z , the step of generating ~~a set of~~
undominated profile pairs is followed by a step of excluding ~~from the set any~~
profile pairs that are pairwise ranked as corollaries of the ordinal pairwise
rankings performed for any previous value of z .

8. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 6 wherein the

step of generating a set of undominated profile pairs with z criteria for each profile comprises: ~~the steps of:~~

~~forming all uninstantiated profiles with z criteria each by generating all unique subsets of the pre-defined criteria with z elements~~ taking all combinations of all of the criteria, z criteria at-a-time; and

~~for each uninstantiated profile formed~~ combination of the criteria, pairing it with a replica of itself to form ~~an uninstantiated profile pair~~ a pair of combinations of the criteria; and

~~instantiating the criteria of each uninstantiated profile pair with combinations of the pre-defined categories~~ for each pair of the combinations of the criteria, associating the criteria with all combinations of the pre-defined categories for the criteria in the pair to form all unique undominated profile pairs with z criteria ~~possible from the uninstantiated pair~~ possible from each pair of the combinations of the criteria.

9. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 8 wherein the step of ~~instantiating the criteria of an uninstantiated profile pair,~~ for each pair of the combinations of the criteria, associating the criteria with all combinations of the pre-defined categories for the criteria in the pair, comprises the steps of:

listing the numbers between 1 and $2^{z-1} - 1$ in binary form using z bits as a list of first z -tuples, and pairing each first z -tuple with a further ordered z -tuple of bits, wherein each '0' or '1' of the further ordered z -tuple is the complement of each of the original z bits of the first z -tuple, to form $2^{z-1} - 1$ pairs of ordered z -tuples of bits; and

for each pair of ordered z -tuples of bits, generating ~~a copy of the~~
~~uninstantiated profile pair and forming an undominated profile pair by~~
~~instantiating~~ defining each of the z criteria of a first profile in the pair according to the relative magnitudes of the bits in the first z -tuple and ~~instantiating~~
defining each of the z criteria of the second profile in the pair according to the relative magnitudes of the bits in the further z -tuple.

10. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 further comprising the ~~further~~ step of excluding undominated profile pairs that are theoretically impossible.

11. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the step of generating undominated profile pairs further comprises the ~~further~~ step of:

generating all possible undominated profile pairs that are consistent with a pre-defined subset of all possible profiles, and storing them on a temporary list;

and wherein the decision support method further comprises the ~~further~~ steps of:

when an ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs is received from the decision maker, removing all members of the temporary list that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as corollaries of any ordinal pairwise rankings of profile pairs already performed; and

when the temporary list is empty, solving the system of equalities/inequalities representing the ordinal pairwise rankings to rank the pre-defined subset of profiles.

12. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the step of generating undominated profile pairs further comprises the ~~further~~ step of:

generating all possible undominated profile pairs that are consistent with a pre-defined subset of all possible profiles, and storing them on a temporary list;

and wherein the decision support method further comprises the ~~further~~ steps of:

when an ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs is received from the decision maker, removing all members of the temporary list that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as corollaries of any ordinal pairwise rankings of profile pairs already performed; and

solving the system of equalities/inequalities representing the ordinal pairwise rankings to rank the pre-defined subset of profiles and designating profiles that cannot be ranked below any other profile as top-ranked profiles;

wherein the process of ordinal pairwise ranking is halted once the temporary list contains no undominated profile pair for which one profile in the pair is one of the top-ranked profiles and the other profile in the pair is not a top-ranked profile, and the number of top-ranked profiles is less than or equal to a required number of top-ranked profiles.

13. (Currently amended) The decision support method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying undominated profile pairs that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as a corollary of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed comprises repeating, for each undominated profile pair not yet presented to the decision maker, the steps of:

imposing a strict ordinal ranking of the profiles in the profile pair, and including the resulting inequality with the system of equalities/inequalities that represents the ordinal pairwise rankings of profile pairs already performed; and testing the system of equalities/inequalities for the existence of a solution in terms of point values,

wherein if a solution does not exist, then the profile pair is identified as implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as a corollary of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed but wherein, if a solution does exist, then the method further comprises the ~~further~~ steps of:

for the same profile pair, imposing the reverse strict ordinal ranking of the profiles in the profile pair, and including the resulting inequality with the system of equalities/inequalities representing the ordinal pairwise rankings of profile pairs already performed; and

testing the system of equalities/inequalities for the existence of a solution in terms of point values,

wherein if a solution does not exist, then the profile pair is identified as implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as a corollary of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed, but wherein if a solution does exist, then the profile pair is identified as not implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as a corollary of ordinal pairwise rankings already performed.

14. (Currently amended) A decision support system comprising: two or more pre-defined criteria stored in data memory, each criterion capable of being ~~instantiated~~ associated with one or more pre-defined and ordinally ranked categories; and

a processor programmed to perform a comparative assessment of profiles, each profile comprising a set of two or more of the criteria, each criterion in the set ~~instantiated~~ associated with one of the categories for that criterion, wherein the comparative assessment comprises the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs, the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs comprising:

generating undominated profile pairs;

presenting undominated profile pairs to a decision maker on a display;

receiving from the decision maker via an input device an ordinal ranking of the profiles in each profile pair presented on the display; and

identifying profile pairs that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as corollaries of ordinal pairwise rankings performed and excluding ~~them~~ the profile pairs from subsequent presentation to the decision maker;

the processor further programmed to solve a system of equalities/inequalities that represents the ordinal pairwise rankings to obtain at least one output.

15-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium having stored thereon a decision support computer program comprising:

for two or more pre-defined criteria stored in data memory, each criterion capable of being ~~instantiated~~ associated with one or more pre-defined and ordinally ranked categories, computer executable instructions for performing a method for a comparative assessment of profiles, each profile comprising a set of two or more of the criteria, each criterion in the set ~~instantiated~~ associated with one of the categories for that criterion, wherein the comparative assessment comprises the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs, the ordinal pairwise ranking of profile pairs comprising:

generating undominated profile pairs;

presenting undominated profile pairs to a decision maker on a display;

receiving from the decision maker via an input device an ordinal ranking of the profiles in each profile pair presented on the display; and

identifying profile pairs that are implicitly ordinally pairwise ranked as corollaries of ordinal pairwise rankings performed and excluding ~~them~~ the profile pairs from subsequent presentation to the decision maker;

the decision support computer program further comprising computer executable instructions for solving a system of equalities/inequalities that represents the ordinal pairwise rankings to obtain at least one output.

28-39. (Canceled)